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ABSTRACT

Because an instructor's first interaction with students on the first day of class can determine the success of those to follow, it is important to explore what happens in a classroom setting before offering prescriptions on how to best handle situations in that setting. To understand how students' responses to specific attributes related to instructional style are linked to global evaluations of teaching effectiveness, six research questions were formulated. Participants were 800 students at the University of Illinois--125 were freshmen, 434 were sophomores, 140 were juniors, 79 were seniors, 8 were graduate students, and 14 did not indicate their rank. Data were collected in 29 sections of three 100-level courses in three different subjects. To gather reactions to the first day of class, a multi-part survey was developed. The section of the questionnaire that provided primary data for analyses consisted of 22 five-point Likert Scale items. Findings suggest that the most important element of instructional effectiveness on the first day of class is communicative competence. Since the first day of class is a day where students begin to develop an instructional relationship with their teacher, it appears they are looking for communicative competence to reassure them that their instructor has attributes that will enable them to succeed in the course. Demographic and attitude elements such as a student's year in school, an instructor's gender, prior student motivation, and even course type do appear to play some role in how a student evaluates an instructor on the first day. (Contains 25 references and 9 tables.) (NKA)

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Students' initial impressions of teaching effectiveness:

An analysis of structured response items

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Students' Initial Impressions of Teaching Effectiveness: An Analysis of Structured Response Items

> Teachers throughout the world enter classrooms every day and attempt to create an environment that maximizes student learning...social scientists still are not sure what to tell teachers who question how they can become more effective in the classroom. As a matter of fact, it has only been within the last 20 years that educational researchers were willing to agree that the classroom behavior of individual teachers does have significant impact upon students. The question remains, however, as to exactly which classroom behaviors cause student learning or, at least, can be said to be positively related to effective teaching. (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 167)

Although the first class session is seen as important because it can have lasting effects on the rest of the semester in terms of climate, organization, and control established by instructors (Beck & Lambert, 1977; Brooks & Hawke, 1987-88; Moskowitz & Hayman, 1976), little research has explored which instructional attributes students regard as most effective on the first day. Instructional communication scholars have been examining the role that communication plays in the educational environment for some time now (Robinson, 1993), but their scholarship regarding the first-day phenomenon has been quite limited. As Shulman (1986) points out, we conduct research in a field to make sense of it, to get smarter about it, and to learn how to perform more adeptly within it. Because an instructor's first interaction with students can determine the success of those to follow, it is important that we explore what happens in a classroom setting before offering prescriptions on how to best handle situations in that setting (Friedrich, Cawyer, & Storey., 1993).

Despite the proliferation of research on end-of-semester student evaluation of instruction, little information exists that addresses the evaluations students make of their instructors on the first day of class. To obtain a more complete understanding of how students' responses to specific attributes related to instructional style are linked to global evaluations of teaching effectiveness the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What overall factors, constituted from ratings of individual instructional attributes, contribute to the first-day student evaluation of overall teaching effectiveness?

RQ2: What individual attributes of instructional evaluation do students rank as most important on the first day of class?

RQ3: What attributes of instructional evaluation are the best predictors of overall teaching and course effectiveness?

RQ4: Do course characteristics impact overall student ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class?

RQ5: Do instructor characteristics impact overall student ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class?

RQ6: Do student characteristics impact overall student ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class?

Method

Participants

Participants were 800 students at the University of Illinois (394 females, 383 males, and 23 participants who did not indicate their gender on the survey). One-hundred-twenty-five of the students were freshman, 434 were sophomores, 140 were juniors, 79 were seniors, 8 were

graduate students, and 14 did not indicate class rank.

Three undergraduate courses were chosen for data collection to represent variation in subject matter and to include a number of different instructors who might vary in personal communication styles. Data were collected in 29 sections of three different 100-level courses. The first course was a community health course that dealt with issues of drug use and abuse. The community health course typically serves as an elective. The second course was an economics statistics course. This course is required for business and economics majors. The last course was a mathematics course in calculus. This course is generally the first mathematics requirement for engineering majors and also fulfills the math general education requirement.

One-hundred-ninety-four of the participants were enrolled in the 9 community health sections (115 taking the course as an elective, 76 as a requirement, and 3 not indicating whether the course was an elective or required). Two-hundred-ninety-five were enrolled in the 10 economics sections (12 taking the course as an elective, 278 as a requirement, and 5 not indicating whether the course was an elective or required). Three-hundred-eleven of the participants were enrolled in the 10 mathematics sections (14 taking the course as an elective, 289 as a requirement, and 8 not indicating whether the course was an elective or requirement).

The 29 class sections surveyed were taught by a total of 21 different teaching assistants (TAs). Five TAs were responsible for teaching the 9 sections of community health (4 female, 1 male), 6 were responsible for the 10 sections of economics (2 female, 4 male), and 10 were responsible for the 10 sections of mathematics (1 female, 9 male).

Materials

In order to gather student reactions to the first day of class, a multi-part survey was

developed. The survey instrument included an opening paragraph which stressed confidentiality.

Likert Scales

The section of the questionnaire that provided the primary data for the analyses reported in this paper, consisted of 22 five-point Likert Scale items. The first two items at the beginning of this section asked students to indicate global reactions to the overall quality of the course and the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness. Response choices for these two items were: exceptionally high, high, average, low, and exceptionally low. The remaining 20 items asked students to rate the instructor on specific instructional attributes such as organizational skill, clarity, and ability to generate interest. Response choices for these attribute items were: strongly agree, agree somewhat, neutral, disagree somewhat, and strongly disagree.

To ensure that all potentially important instructional attributes from a review of end-of-semester evaluation literature were included, attributes known to be highly relevant to affective and achievement outcomes were considered. In addition, the University of Illinois' instructor and evaluation system item catalog (Office of Instructional and Management Services, 1977) was also consulted for guidance on how to most appropriately word items.

Rankings

The next section of the structured-response portion of the questionnaire consisted of a listing of the same instructional attributes identified in the previous section (minus the overall teaching item and the overall course item). Students were asked to choose the five attributes they found most relevant to their impression formation on the first day (the instructions for this section used the word "impression" in a general sense and did not specify impression of instructor or impression of course). Students were asked to rank-order those five attributes

according to their importance (with "1" representing the most important). They were also asked to place a "0" next to any attribute they found to be relatively unimportant. These rankings were obtained to provide a secondary measure of the relative importance students attach to specific instructional features.

Participant Characteristics

The last section of the questionnaire requested information concerning the participants. Students were asked to indicate their gender and year in school, as well as the instructor's gender. They also were asked to indicate if the course they were taking was a requirement or an elective and to indicate their anticipated grade. Questions dealing with initial student motivation to take the course were: (1) Would you take this course regardless of who was teaching it?, (2) If other courses were available to meet the need this course serves in your program, would you still take this course?, and (3) Rate your interest in this course prior to the first day of class.

The purpose of asking the above questions was two-fold. First it was important to identify characteristics of the participants. Secondly, research exists that indicates some of the variables involved may potentially bias student evaluation of instruction. For example, Barnes and Barnes (1993), Cashin (1990), and Hativa (1996) all found that instructors teaching in different subject areas may be evaluated differently by students. Whether a course is being taken as an elective or a requirement may also impact student evaluation (Scherr & Scherr, 1990). Mixed results have been recorded when exploring evaluation differences based on both instructor gender and student gender (Boggs & Wiemann, 1994; Dukes & Victoria, 1989; Freeman, 1994; Hancock, Shannon, & Trentham, 1993; Smith, Medendorp, Ranck, Morrison, & Kopfman, 1994). Other student factors that may play a role in evaluation are year in school

(Aleamoni & Hexner, 1980), anticipated grade (Hudson, 1989), and prior interest in the course (Prave & Baril, 1993).

Finally, participants were asked if they were planning to either drop the course or change to another section of the course. They were asked to explain why they might be dropping the course or changing to another section.

Analysis

Factor Analysis

Research Question One asked what factors, constituted from ratings of individual attributes, contribute to the first-day student evaluation of overall teaching effectiveness. A factor analysis of the Likert scale items was conducted. However, prior to conducting the factor analysis, a check for reliability was made by comparing the means of the items "the instructor was well prepared" and "the instructor was ill prepared." A Chronbach's alpha of .81 indicated a reasonably high level of internal consistency of the items being rated.

It should be noted that of the respondents completing this portion of the survey, 15 did not provide an overall teaching effectiveness rating and therefore their responses were removed from the data set for the factor analysis. A principal components factor analysis with an equamax rotation of the instructional attributes revealed four basic factors which were labeled: Concern for Students, Communicative Competence, Expectations, and Benefit. All attributes which loaded at or above a .5 criterion (Norusis, 1993) were included in the respective factor (see Table 1). The item "the instructor shows interest and enthusiasm in the subject" loaded above the .5 criterion for both the Concern for Students and Communicative Competence factors and was included in both of these two factors as the attribute is relevant to both concepts those

two factors represent. The attributes "I believe the instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class" and "I believe the instructor's evaluation of student work will be helpful" did not load on any of the four factors and were not included in the factor matrix.

All four of the factors had eigenvalues of 1.00 or greater (Norusis, 1993). The eigenvalue of Concern for Students was 8.62, accounting for 45% of the variance. The eigenvalue for Communicative Competence was 1.37, accounting for 7% of the variance. The eigenvalue for Expectations was 1.12, accounting for 6% of the variance. And the eigenvalue of Benefit was 1.05, accounting for 6% of the variance. This four-factor model accounted for 64% of the cumulative variance.

The first factor, Concern for Students, was comprised of six instructional attributes: "the instructor shows interest and enthusiasm in the subject," "the instructor communicates a genuine desire to teach," "the instructor seems willing and able to help students individually," "the instructor seems to have a genuine interest in and concern for students," "the instructor seems nice." and "the instructor seems friendly." The alpha reliability coefficient for this Concern for Students factor was .89.

The second factor, Communicative Competence, was comprised of seven attributes: "the instructor was well prepared," "the instructor's presentation was well organized," "the instructor appears to have a good command of the subject material," "the instructor got students interested in the subject," "the instructor shows interest and enthusiasm in the subject," "the instructor makes ideas clear," and "the instructor has the ability to speak distinctly and be clearly heard." The alpha reliability coefficient for this Communicative Competence factor was .88.

The third factor, Expectations, was comprised of three attributes: "I clearly understand

what is expected of me in this class," "the workload in this class seems reasonable," and "grading in the course will be fair." The alpha reliability coefficient for this Expectations factor was .67.

The fourth factor, Benefit, was comprised of two attributes: "this course will increase my general knowledge" and "this course will help me develop career skills." The alpha reliability coefficient for this Benefit factor was .55.

Rankings

Research Question Two asked what individual attributes of instructional evaluation students rank as most important on the first day of class. This question was addressed by tallying the number of times each instructional attribute was ranked by students as being one of the most important attributes or being one of the least important attributes. The section of the ranking of the instructional importance of instructional attributes was completed by 653 participants (145 did not complete this section of the questionnaire at all and 2 did not complete this section correctly). The five attributes most frequently ranked first were: "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class (78)," "instructor has a good command of the subject material (63)," "instructor makes ideas clear (60)," "instructor got students interested in the subject (54)," and "I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class (54)" (see Table 2).

The frequencies for attributes most often ranked in the top three were also computed. The five attributes most frequently ranked in the top three were: "instructor has a good command of the subject material (182)," "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class (165)," "instructor makes ideas clear (152)," "workload in this class seems reasonable (152)," and "instructor shows interest and enthusiasm in the subject (123)" (see Table 2).

The frequencies for attributes most often ranked in the top five were computed as well. The five attributes most frequently ranked in the top five were: "instructor has a good command of the subject material (274)," "workload in this class seems reasonable (271)," "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class (248)," "instructor makes ideas clear (242)," and "I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class (210)" (see Table 2).

The five attributes most frequently ranked "0" (participants were asked to place a "0" next to any impression they found to be relatively unimportant) were: "instructor seems nice (117)," "course will help me develop career skills (106)," "instructor seems friendly (102)," "instructor has a lively and interesting style of speaking (102)," and "instructor's evaluation of student work will be helpful (99)" (see Table 3). Interpretation of frequencies of dimensions rated "0" should be viewed cautiously as 13% of the respondents placed a "0" next to all dimensions they did not rank as 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

Regression Analysis

Research Question Three asked what attributes of instructional evaluation are the best predictors of overall teaching and course effectiveness. In order to find out which attributes of instructional evaluation are the best predictors of overall teaching and course effectiveness a series of separate regression analyses were conducted using the items: "Rate the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness" and "Rate the overall quality of this course" as criterion variables.

Attributes predictive of teaching effectiveness. A stepwise regression was conducted to determine which of the 20 Likert scale instructional attributes were significant predictors of overall teaching effectiveness. The multiple R shows a substantial correlation between seven

predictor variables and the dependent variable of overall teaching effectiveness (R=.78). The R-square value indicates that about 61% of the variance in overall teaching effectiveness is explained by seven predictor variables. The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered variables: "I believe the instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class" has the closest relationship to overall teaching effectiveness (β=.24), followed by "the instructor makes ideas clear" (β=.17), "the instructor communicates a genuine desire to teach" (β=.15), "the instructor's presentation was well organized" (β=.15), "the instructor has the ability to speak distinctly and be clearly heard" (β=.12), "the instructor got students interested in the subject" (β=.09), and "the instructor appears to have a good command of the subject material" (β=.07). The direction of influence for all seven is positive.

Attributes predictive of course quality. Although teaching effectiveness was the main focus of this study, as a secondary analysis a stepwise regression was conducted to determine which of the 20 Likert scale instructional attributes were significant predictors of overall course quality. The multiple R shows a substantial correlation between seven predictor variables and the dependent variable of overall quality of the course (R=.59). The R-square value indicates that about 35% of the variance in overall course quality is explained by seven predictor variables. The β values indicate the relative association of the entered variables: "the instructor got students interested in the subject" (β=.22), "this course will increase my general knowledge" (β=.19), "I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class" (β=.08), "this course will help me develop career skills" (β=.11), "the workload in this class seems reasonable" (β=.09), "the instructor seems to have a genuine interest in and concern for students" (β=.08), "I believe the instructor's evaluation of student work will be helpful" (β=.08). The direction of influence

for all seven is positive.

Factors predictive of teaching effectiveness. The "regression" method was used to compute factor scores from the four factors outlined in the factor analysis (above). A stepwise regression analysis was conducted using the factor scores to find out the predictive value of each of the four factors: Concern for Students, Communicative Competence, Expectations, and Benefit.

The multiple R shows a substantial correlation between the four factors and the criterion variable of overall teaching effectiveness (R=.76). The R-square value indicates that 58% of the variance in overall teaching effectiveness is explained by these four factors.

The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered factors: Communicative Competence (β=.57), Concern for Students (β=.34), Expectations (β=.31), and Benefit (β=.23).

Factors predictive of course quality. The multiple R shows a substantial correlation between the four factors and the criterion variable of overall course quality (R=.57). The R-square value indicates that about 32% of the variance in overall teaching effectiveness is explained by the four factors.

The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered factors: Benefit (β=.37), Expectations (β=.27), Communicative Competence (β=.25), and Concern for Students (β=.22).

Course Characteristics

Course subject. Research Question Four asked which course characteristics impact overall student ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class. To answer this question, analyses of variance and t-tests were undertaken to determine the impact of course subject and course type (elective or requirement) on ratings.

The results of a one way, between groups ANOVA showed significant differences between the rating of the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness and the three course subjects of community health, economics, and mathematics with the community health course students rating their instructors the highest in effectiveness, $F(2, 781)=46.27$, $p<.00$. A Sheffe post hoc analysis showed significant differences between all three course types ($p<.00$), with community health TAs receiving the highest ratings and mathematics TAs receiving the lowest ratings. Table 4 reports mean effectiveness ratings for each course type.

Results of a one way, between groups ANOVA also showed significant differences between the rating of the overall quality of the class and the three course subjects of community health, economics, and mathematics with the community health course students rating the overall quality of their course the highest, $F(2, 787)=18.55$, $p<.00$. A Sheffe post hoc analysis showed significant differences in overall course quality ratings between community health and economics courses ($p<.02$) and community health and mathematics courses ($p<.00$). The mean course quality ratings also differed for economics courses and mathematics courses ($p<.00$). Table 5 reports mean effectiveness ratings for each course type.

Elective or requirement. Of the 800 respondents, 770 indicated whether the course was an elective or fulfills a requirement for them. A t-test for two independent means found the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness was rated significantly higher by students who were taking the course as an elective, $t(768)=4.36$, $p<.00$. The mean for those taking the course as an elective was 3.76 ($SD=.72$), and for those taking the course to fulfill a requirement the mean was 3.45 ($SD=.75$).

Instructor Characteristics

Overall means by section. Research Question Five asked which instructor characteristics impact overall student ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class. To answer this question, t-tests were undertaken to determine the impact of instructor gender and accented speech on ratings.

First, however, means for the overall teaching effectiveness rating were calculated for each of the 29 sections (some TAs were responsible for teaching more than one section in the study). The five highest rated sections were: Section 21 - mathematics, female TA, nonaccented speech (M=4.15, SD=.67); Section 2 - community health, male TA, nonaccented speech (M=4.15, SD=.46); Section 8 - community health, female TA, nonaccented speech (M=4.06, SD=.42); Section 23 - mathematics, male TA, nonaccented speech (M=4.03, SD=.47); and Section 3 - community health, male TA, nonaccented speech (M=4.0, SD=.61). The five lowest rated sections were: Section 28 - mathematics, male TA, accented speech (M=3.13, SD=.61); Section 25 - mathematics, male TA, nonaccented speech (M=3.11, SD=.79); Section 24 - mathematics, male TA, accented speech (M=2.70, SD=.79); Section 26 - mathematics, male TA, accented speech (M=2.57, SD=.83); and Section 22 - mathematics, male TA, accented speech (M=2.41, SD=.73) (see Table 6).

Instructor gender. Of the 800 respondents, 768 indicated their instructor's gender (see Table 6). A t-test for two independent means found that female instructors' overall teaching effectiveness ratings were significantly higher than male instructors' ratings, $t(766)=5.76$, $p<.00$. The mean for female TAs was 3.74 (SD=.65) and the mean for male TAs was 3.40 (SD .77).

Accented or nonaccented speech. Although no question on the survey asked students to

indicate whether or not their TA had an accent, the researcher noted which TAs in the study were non-native speakers of English and thus spoke with an accent for TA demographic purposes and later analyses. In all instances, where a TA spoke with an accent (TAs not native to the United States), this fact was mentioned in the open-ended responses related to his or her section.

Respondents' focus on this instructor characteristic is supported by research done by Neves and Sanyal (1991) and Rao (1994). Neves and Sanyal noted that instructional survey results found American students prefer U.S. born instructors as many feel they were not confident a foreign born instructor would be able to communicate effectively. Rao labels this phenomenon the "Oh No! Syndrome," referring to the reaction of American undergraduates when they are faced with a TA who does not speak English as their first language on the first day of class.

Eight TAs with accents taught 10 of the course sections and 13 TAs without accents taught 19 course sections (see Table 6). A t-test for two independent means found that the overall teaching effectiveness ratings were significantly higher for TAs without accents than for TAs with accents, $t(782)=11.13$, $p<.00$. The mean for TAs with nonaccented speech was 3.73 ($SD=.65$) and the mean for TAs with accented speech was 3.15 ($SD=.79$).

Student Characteristics

Year in school. Research Question Six asked which student characteristics impact overall student ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class. To answer this question, a series of analyses of variance and t-tests were undertaken to determine the impact of year in school, student gender, anticipated grade, prior interest, willingness to take regardless of

instructor, willingness to take if another course fills need, plans to drop the course, and plans to change sections on ratings.

The results of a one way, between groups ANOVA showed significant differences between the rating of the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness and the year in school of the participants (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student), with seniors rating their instructors' effectiveness more highly, $F(4, 767)=4.96$, $p<.00$. A Sheffe post hoc analysis found the mean ratings of freshmen were significantly different than the mean ratings of juniors ($p<.03$) and seniors ($p<.02$). Table 7 reports mean effectiveness ratings for each year in school.

Student gender. Of the 800 respondents, 763 indicated their gender. A t-test for two independent means found the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness was not rated significantly higher by either women or men, $t(761)=.89$, $p<.37$.

Anticipated grade. The results of a one way, between groups ANOVA showed significant differences between the rating of the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness and the grade the respondent was anticipating receiving ("A," "B," "C," "D," "F"), with students anticipating an "A" rating their instructors' effectiveness most highly, $F(4, 733)=13.55$, $p<.00$. A Sheffe post hoc analysis showed a significant difference between mean ratings of students anticipating an "A" and students anticipating a "B" ($p<.00$), students anticipating a "C" ($p<.03$), and students anticipating an "F" ($p<.00$). The mean ratings of students anticipating a "B" differed significantly from the mean ratings of students anticipating an "A" ($p<.00$) and an "F" ($p<.00$). The mean ratings of students anticipating a "C" differed significantly from the mean ratings of students anticipating an "A" ($p<.03$) and an "F" ($p<.00$). The mean ratings of students anticipating an "F" differed significantly from the mean ratings of students anticipating an "A"

($p<.00$), a "B" ($p<.00$), and a "C" ($p<.00$). Table 8 reports mean effectiveness ratings for each anticipated grade.)

Prior interest in course. The results of a one way, between groups ANOVA showed significant differences between the rating of the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness and the respondent's level of prior interest in the course (rated on a five-point Likert scale), $F(4, 763)=9.43$, $p<.00$. Table 9 reports mean effectiveness ratings for the different levels of prior interest in the course and shows that students who were extremely interested in the course rated their instructors' effectiveness most highly. A Sheffe post hoc analysis showed a significant difference between students who were extremely interested and those who were somewhat interested ($p<.04$), neutral ($p<.01$), somewhat disinterested ($p<.00$), and extremely disinterested ($p<.00$). Students who were somewhat interested differed significantly from students who were extremely interested ($p<.04$) and somewhat disinterested ($p<.01$). Students who were neutral differed significantly from students who were extremely interested ($p<.01$). Students who were somewhat disinterested differed significantly from students who were extremely interested ($p<.00$) and somewhat interested ($p<.00$). Students who were extremely disinterested differed significantly from students who were extremely interested ($p<.00$).

Would take course regardless of instructor. Of the 800 respondents, 769 responded to the item: "Would you take this course regardless of who was teaching it?" Six-hundred-ninety-eight respondents indicated they would take the course regardless of who was teaching it and 71 respondents indicated they would not. A t-test for two independent means found the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness was not rated significantly higher by either group, $t(767)=.52$, $p<.61$.

Would take course even if other courses met need. Of the 800 respondents, 714 responded to the item: "If other courses were available to meet the need this course serves in your program, would you still take this course?" Four-hundred-sixty-two respondents indicated they would take the course even if others met their need and 252 respondents indicated they would not. A t-test for two independent means found the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness was rated significantly higher by students who would still take the course if other courses were available to meet the need this course serves in their program, $t(712)=6.05$, $p<.00$. The mean for those indicating they would still take the course if other courses were available to meet the need this course serves in their program was 3.63 (SD=.70) and the mean for those indicating they would not take the course if others were available to meet their needs was 3.28 (SD=.79).

Planning to drop course. Of the 800 respondents, 764 responded to the item: "Are you planning to drop this course?". Thirteen participants reported they were planning to drop the course. A t-test for two independent means found the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness was rated significantly higher by students who were not planning to drop the course than students who were planning to drop the course, $t(762)=-4.86$, $p<.00$. The mean for those who were not planning to drop the course was 3.54 (SD=.73) and the mean for those planning to drop the course was 2.54 (SD=1.05).

An analysis of the free-response reasons of those planning to drop the course was conducted. Two of the thirteen did not include a response. Responses to this item fell under four categories: Not Needed, Lack of Instructor Communicative Competence, Unacceptable Instructor, and Miscellaneous.

The most frequent response category was Not Needed (45%). Sample responses from this category include "because I won't need it to graduate this December," "already completed comparable course," and "because it's not the one I wanted - I chose it by accident."

The categories of Lack of Instructor Communicative Competence, Unacceptable Instructor, and Miscellaneous contained two responses each (18%). Responses found under the Lack of Instructor Communicative Competence category were: "can't understand teacher" and "I don't think I have a prayer of understanding calculus from a TA who can't teach!" Both of these responses under the Lack of Instructor Communicative Competence category were from students in sections taught by TAs with accented speech. Unacceptable Instructor responses were: "I don't think it will work for me - I have trouble with math and I need a teacher I feel confident in" and "Instructor." The responses found under the Miscellaneous category were: "to make more room on (sic) another more relevant class" and "too hard and I hate it."

Planning to change sections. Of the 800 participants, 744 responded to the item: "Are you planning to change to another section of this course?" Forty-one respondents indicated they were planning to change sections. A *t*-test for two independent means found the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness was rated significantly higher by students who were not planning to change sections than students who were planning to change sections, $t(742) = -7.33$, $p < .00$. The mean for those not planning to change sections was 3.58 ($SD = .71$) and the mean for those planning to change sections was 2.73 ($SD = .90$).

An analysis of the free-response reasons of those planning to change sections was conducted. Three of the forty-one did not include a response. Responses to this item fell under five categories: Lack of Instructor Communicative Competence, Schedule, Unacceptable

Instructor, Previous Instructor, and Course Difficulty.

The most frequent response category was Lack of Instructor Communicative Competence (47%). Sample responses from this category include "the instructor is difficult to understand," "I will give it another week, but after the first day I am very disappointed and am going to find out how to change classes - I do not want to sit around and struggle every day just to hear what he says," and "possibly because I can't understand the TA's English." Seventeen of the eighteen responses in this category came from students in sections taught by TAs with accented speech.

The category of Schedule was the second most frequent category (29%). Sample responses from this category were: "fits schedule better," "time is too early for me," and "conflict in my schedule." The category of Unacceptable Instructor was the third most frequent category (16%). Sample responses from this category were: "I think I will fail if I don't get a different instructor," "personality of TA," and "teacher." The category of Previous Instructor contained two responses (5%). "I would like to change to the section my Econ 102 TA taught because I am familiar with him and know what to expect from this class, plus he is a very effective teacher" and "my TA from Econ 102 is now teaching Econ 172 - she is good (sic) TA and I'd prefer to have her" were the responses under this category. The category of Course Difficulty contained a single response (3%). "Only if too advanced for me" was the response under this category.

Discussion

To obtain a more complete understanding of students' responses to instructors on the first day of class, a multi-part structured response survey was developed to assist in uncovering student reactions to their instructors on the first day of class. Participants were 800 students at

the University of Illinois.

Demographic items related to the instructor, course, and students were included in this data analysis. Many of these instructor/course items proved to be significantly correlated with overall teaching effectiveness ratings.

A one-way between-groups ANOVA showed a significant difference in teaching effectiveness rating based on the type of course (community health, economics, mathematics) the participant was taking when making the first-day rating. Community health courses received significantly higher ratings and a post hoc analysis showed a significant difference between all three course types. This result is consistent with previous research that found that instructors teaching in different subject areas tend to be evaluated differently by students (Barnes & Barnes, 1993; Cashin, 1990; Hativa, 1996).

A *t*-test of two independent means found that students taking the course as an elective as opposed to a requirement had higher teaching effectiveness ratings. Scherr and Scherr (1990) also found that courses taken as an elective are often evaluated more favorably than required courses.

There is some controversy surrounding the role both instructor and student gender play in the evaluation process. For example, Dukes and Victoria (1989) found that female instructors score higher than males in effectiveness when neither are department chairs. Yet, among department chairs, males scored higher. Boggs and Wiemann (1994), however, found little evidence that teacher gender is by itself an important influence on students' ratings of communicative competence. The results presented in this chapter support the notion that male and female instructors tend to be rated differently by students. A *t*-test of two independent means

found that female instructors were rated significantly higher than male instructors.

Hancock, Shannon, & Trentham (1993) found that female students appear to rate instructors higher than male students and Smith et al. (1994) found that female and male students differ in the importance they place on general features of the ideal professor, with females valuing interpersonal qualities more highly than males. With the data presented in this chapter, however, a t-test of two independent means found that the student's gender played no significant role in their evaluation of their instructor, which counters the findings of researchers like Hancock et al. and Smith et al.

Although the survey did not include a question asking whether or not the instructor had an accent, after the issue of accented speech became obviously important based on an analysis of the open-ended data in Chapter Two, the researcher noted which instructors had accented speech (non-native to the United States/English not first language) and which did not. A t-test of two independent means found that instructors without accents were rated significantly higher than instructors with accents. This finding comes as no surprise as Neves and Sanyal (1991) and Rao (1994) found that American students prefer U.S. born instructors. Rao refers to this as the "Oh No! Syndrome." This syndrome focuses on the lack of confidence American students have in the communicative skills of foreign born instructors.

A one-way between groups ANOVA showed that seniors rated their instructors more highly than freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and graduate students. A post hoc analysis found a significant difference in the ratings of freshmen as compared to juniors and seniors. Aleamoni and Hexner (1980), in a review, found that year in school may play a role in instructional evaluation, but the findings are not completely consistent. In their review, they cite five studies

where year in school had no bearing on instructional ratings, and 11 studies where graduate students and/or upper division students rated instructors more highly. The findings in this study tend to echo the 11 studies Aleamoni and Hexner (1980) cite that found that upper division students tend to rate instructors more positively.

Hudson (1989) found that students expecting grades of "A" or "B" will give significantly higher ratings than students expecting grades of "C" or lower. This study supports Hudson's findings. A one-way between-groups ANOVA showed that those students expecting an "A" rated their instructors significantly higher. A post hoc analysis also showed that there were significant differences between those expecting an "A" and those expecting a "B," "C," or "F"; between those expecting a "B" and those expecting an "A" or an "F"; between those expecting a "C" and those expecting an "A" or an "F"; and between those expecting and "F" and those expecting an "A," "B," or "C."

This study also supports the work of Prave and Baril (1993), who found that a student's initial interest in a course will positively impact their rating of their instructor at the end of the semester. A one-way between-groups ANOVA showed a significant difference in how subjects in this study rated their instructors on the first day of class. Students who indicated their prior interest in the course as "extremely interested," rated their instructors the highest. A post hoc analysis showed a significant difference between students who indicated they were extremely interested as compared to students who were somewhat interested, neutral, somewhat disinterested, and extremely disinterested; a difference between students who were somewhat interested and students who were extremely interested or somewhat disinterested; a difference between students who were neutral and students who were extremely interested; a difference

between students who were somewhat disinterested and students who were extremely interested and students who were somewhat interested; and a difference between students who were extremely disinterested and students who were extremely interested.

Two additional questions related to student motivation were addressed in the survey. Students were asked if they would take the course regardless of who was teaching it and to indicate if they would still take the course if other courses were available to meet the need this course serves in their program. A t-test of two independent means showed no significant difference in ratings between students who would or would not take the class regardless of who was teaching it. An independent t-test of two independent means did show, however, a significant difference between students who would or would not take the course if other courses met their needs, with students taking the course even if other courses met their needs rating their instructors more positively.

Students were also asked to indicate if they were planning to drop the course or change sections after attending the first day of class. Only 13 of the 800 participants indicated they were planning to drop the course. A t-test of two independent means found those planning not to drop the course rated their instructor significantly higher than those who were planning to drop. The most frequent response given when students were asked to comment on why they were planning to drop the class was that they realized they did not need the course (45%).

Forty-one students indicated they would be trying to change to another section of the course. A t-test of two independent means showed that students not planning to change sections rated their instructors significantly higher than students who were planning to change sections. The most frequent response given when students were asked to comment on why they were

planning to change sections was a concern that their instructor was lacking in Communicative Competence (47%). This supports findings from this and previous chapters that an instructor's Communicative Competence plays a strong role in positive evaluation.

The Likert Scale section of the survey consisted of two global effectiveness items (instructor and course) and 20 instructional attribute items. The second structured response section consisted of a listing of the same instructional attributes identified in the previous section (minus the overall teaching item and the overall course item). Students were asked to rank their top five attributes and to identify any attribute(s) they felt was not relevant to the impressions they form on the first day of class.

A principal components factor analysis with an equamax rotation of the instructional attributes (excluding the global teaching and course items) revealed four basic factors which accounted for 64% of the cumulative variance. These four factors were identified as Concern for Students, Communicative Competence, Expectations, and Benefit.

Stepwise regression analyses of the factor scores from the factor analysis, using the two global items (overall teaching and overall course effectiveness ratings) as criterion variables revealed that the four-factor model accounted for 58% of the variance explained for the teaching effectiveness variable. The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered factors on the teaching effectiveness variable: Communicative Competence (β=.57), Concern for Students (β=.34), Expectations (β=.31), and Benefit (β=.23).

The four-factor model accounted for 32% of the variance explained for the course effectiveness variable. The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered factors on the course effectiveness variable: Benefit (β=.37), Expectations (β=.27), Communicative

Competence (β=.25), and Concern for Students (β=.22).

As the regression analyses reveal, the factors that appear to most influence ratings of teaching effectiveness are quite different than the factors that appear to most influence course effectiveness. The factor of Communicative Competence, which encompasses attributes that focus on an instructor's organizational skills, command of subject, ability to create interest, ability to speak clearly, and ability to explain ideas clearly, has the strongest influence on the teaching effectiveness variable. However, the Benefit factor, which encompasses attributes that focus on a student's belief that the course will increase their knowledge, and that the course will increase their career skills, has the strongest influence on the course effectiveness variable. Based on these findings, it seems that students differentiate between which attributes they feel will lead to a positive review of the instructor and a positive review of the course.

Regression analyses were also run with the individual instructional attributes as predictor variables and the two global effectiveness items as criterion variables. Seven predictor variables accounted for 61% of the variance in the global teaching effectiveness item. The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered variables: "I believe the instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class" has the greatest influence on overall teaching effectiveness (β=.24), followed by "the instructor makes ideas clear" (β=.17), "the instructor communicates a genuine desire to teach" (β=.15), "the instructor's presentation was well organized" (β=.15), "the instructor has the ability to speak distinctly and be clearly heard" (β=.12), "the instructor got students interested in the subject" (β=.09), and "the instructor appears to have a good command of the subject material" (β=.07).

Seven predictor variables accounted for 35% of the variance in the global course

effectiveness item. The β values indicate the relative influence of the entered variables: "the instructor got students interested in the subject" (β=.22), "this course will increase my general knowledge" (β=.19), "I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class" (β=.08), "this course will help me develop career skills" (β=.11), "the workload in this class seems reasonable" (β=.09), "the instructor seems to have a genuine interest in and concern for students" (β=.08), "I believe the instructor's evaluation of student work will be helpful" (β=.08)

The regression analyses of the individual instructional attributes are well-aligned with the four-factor model. The individual items that explained most of the variance in global teaching effectiveness are items relating to Communicative Competence. The individual items that explained much of the variance in global course effectiveness are particularly related to the Evaluation and Benefit factors.

In analyzing the rankings portion of the questionnaire, students identified five attributes students most frequently considered important to the impressions they form on the first day of class: "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class," "instructor has a good command of the subject material," "instructor makes ideas clear," "instructor got students interested in the subject," and "I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class." The five attributes most frequently ranked in the top three were: "instructor has a good command of the subject material," "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class," "instructor makes ideas clear," "workload in this class seems reasonable," and "instructor shows interest and enthusiasm in the subject." The five attributes most frequently ranked in the top five were: "instructor has a good command of the subject material," "workload in this class seems reasonable," "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for the class," "instructor makes ideas

clear," and "I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class."

Most of the consistently top-ranked items are consistent with the findings of the factor analysis. The attributes ranked most frequently as being important on the first day of class dovetail nicely with the Communicative Competence factor ("instructor has a good command of the subject material," "instructor makes ideas clear," "instructor got students interested in the subject," and "instructor shows interest and enthusiasm in the subject") and Evaluation factor ("I clearly understand what is expected of me in this class" and "workload in this class seems reasonable") factors. The only exception is the top-ranked item "instructor will teach at an appropriate level for this class," which did not load on any of the four factors.

Particularly of note, however, is the strong emphasis students put on the attribute "instructor has a good command of the subject material" in the rankings. Since there was only one item on the survey related to this attribute, it gets subsumed under Communicative Competence in the factor analysis. Since there were no other similar items in the survey, it may be substantially underrepresented in importance in all of the analyses.

The five dimensions most frequently ranked "0" (participants were asked to place a "0" next to any impression they found to be relatively unimportant) were: "instructor seems nice," "course will help me develop career skills," "instructor seems friendly," "instructor has a lively and interesting style of speaking," and "instructor's evaluation of student work will be helpful" are consistent with the predictions of global responses and the analysis of the free-response items in Chapter Two. These findings suggest that Communicative Competence tends to dominate overall judgements in both open-ended and structured responses.

Interestingly, the factor analysis and the regression analyses revealed that items related to

the concepts of Concern for Students, Communicative Competence, Evaluation, and Benefit played a large role in teaching effectiveness ratings on the first day of class. However, when students were given a list of attributes and asked to note which attributes they found least important on the first day of class, the attributes most likely chosen by students as irrelevant were the items: "the instructor seems nice," "this course will help me develop career skills," "the instructor seems friendly," "the instructor has a lively and interesting style of speaking," and "I believe the instructor's evaluation of student work will be helpful."

Why students rank items as irrelevant when they, coincidentally, are the same items that ultimately play a large role in student impression development on the first day of class poses an interesting question. First, it should be noted that this particular portion of the data set should be interpreted cautiously as 13% of the respondents marked all dimensions they did not rank as important, as unimportant. It may be this 13% misunderstood the directions and ended up marking items as unimportant that they merely just thought were of secondary importance to them.

Looking at these findings it is apparent that the most important element of instructional effectiveness on the first day of class is Communicative Competence. Although factors such as Concern for Students, Evaluation, and Benefit also play a role in ratings of teaching effectiveness on the first day of class, Communicative Competence appears to play the strongest role in the initial impressions students are forming on the first day. Although there is a focus on the importance attributes connected to Concern for Students play in the end-of-semester evaluation literature, the analyses presented in here reveal that when students are asked to prioritize the importance of instructional attributes on the first day, attributes connected to

Communicative Competence receive the greatest focus and Concern for Student attributes such as "instructor seems nice" and "instructor seems friendly" sift to the bottom of student priorities.

Since the first day of class is a day where students begin to develop an instructional relationship with their teacher (DeVito, 1986), it appears they are looking for communicative cues to reassure them that their instructor has attributes that will enable them to succeed in the course. As Delia et al. (1975) explain, work-related attributes will make a stronger impression on coworkers than social attributes when persons are viewing those attributes against the backdrop of a work-related context. As the classroom would be seen as a work-related context, it makes sense that students would like a TA who seems concerned, but ultimately prefer a TA who is competent in their knowledge of the subject matter: able to teach clearly and at an appropriate level; and able to evaluate student work fairly. Instructors who are knowledgeable and communicate in a clear, interesting manner appear to instill a sense of optimism in students.

Demographic and attitude elements such as a student's year in school, an instructor's gender, prior student motivation, and even course type do appear to play some role in how a student evaluates an instructor on the first day of class. This knowledge may be frustrating for instructors as these elements are beyond one's control. A senior is a senior, an economics class is an economics class, and this cannot be changed. But it appears that the overall skills attributed to Communicative Competence play such a strong role in the establishment of positive impressions on the first class period that even instructors who teach in less popular subject areas or are constrained by other demographic elements may still find ways to improve their effectiveness on the first day by focusing on manifesting Communicative Competence during their first meeting with students.

Note

[1]At the time this study was conducted, the University of Illinois was using the letter "E" to represent a failing grade. However, since the letter "F" is more traditionally used and understood to represent a failing grade, the letter "F" is used throughout this work.

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Table 1

Factor Loadings of the Instructional Dimensions

Attribute	Factor 1 (Concern for students)	Factor 2 (Communicative competence)	Factor 3 (Expectations)	Factor 4 (Benefit)
Well-prepared		.71		
Well-organized		.74		
Command of subject		.63		
Understand expectations			.57	
Creates interest		.57		
Shows enthusiasm	.56	.52		
Desire to teach	.62			
Workload			.73	
Makes ideas clear		.58		
Willing to help	.54			
Concern for students	.69			
Instructor nice	.85			
Instructor friendly	.87			
Increase knowledge				.62
Career skills				.90
Grading fair			.78	
Speak clearly		.62		
Percent of total variance	**.45**	**.07**	**.06**	**.06**

Table 2

Frequency of Attribute Rankings

Attribute	Ranking 1	2	3	4	5	Top 3 (sum)	Top 5 (sum)
Appropriate level	78	44	43	41	42	165	248
Command of subject	63	61	58	50	42	182	274
Makes ideas clear	60	43	49	46	44	152	242
Understand expectations	54	33	34	51	38	121	210
Creates interest	54	39	21	29	20	114	163
Workload	38	48	66	61	58	152	271
Shows enthusiasm	37	42	44	39	37	123	199
Well-prepared	36	43	34	30	25	113	168
Speak clearly	34	31	25	22	31	90	143
Individual help	31	39	34	43	40	104	187
Grading fair	29	44	49	39	47	122	208
Increase knowledge	29	29	24	29	34	82	145
Desire to teach	20	25	23	28	25	68	121
Well-organized	18	29	38	28	27	85	140
Career skills	16	27	21	13	24	64	101
Concern for students	15	29	27	30	31	71	132
Lively speaking style	14	19	16	13	21	49	83

Table 2 (continued)

Frequency of Attribute Rankings

Attribute	Ranking 1	2	3	4	5	Top 3 (sum)	Top 5 (sum)
Instructor friendly	14	12	23	28	38	49	115
Instructor nice	13	12	19	23	20	44	87
Evaluation helpful	2	2	6	10	10	10	30

Table 3

Frequency of Attributes Rated Relatively Unimportant

Attribute	Frequency
Instructor nice	117
Career skills	106
Instructor friendly	102
Lively speaking style	102
Evaluation helpful	99
Increase knowledge	88
Creates interest	87
Desire to teach	85
Concern for students	77
Well-prepared	75
Speak clearly	73
Well-organized	72
Understand expectations	71
Shows enthusiasm	68
Individual help	61
Appropriate level	60
Grading fair	59
Workload	56
Makes ideas clear	51
Command of subject	47

Table 4

Means - Course Subject by Instructor Rating

Course Type	Instructor M	Instructor SD
Community health (n=189)	3.86	.63
Economics (n=288)	3.56	.60
Mathematics (n=307)	3.23	.86

Table 5

Means - Course Subject by Course Rating

	Instructor	
Course Type	M	SD
Community health (n=190)	3.68	.66
Economics (n=292)	3.52	.59
Mathematics (n=308)	3.33	.64

Table 6

Instructor Characteristics and Means of Overall Teaching Effectiveness Ratings by Section

Section Number	Course Type	Instructor Code	Instructor Gender	Accent Code	Class Length	Overall Effectiveness	
						M	SD
21	MA	M	F	N	37	4.15	.67
2	CH	A	M	N	40	4.15	.46
8	CH	C	F	N	86	4.06	.42
23	MA	O	M	N	42	4.03	.47
3	CH	A	M	N	28	4.00	.61
4	CH	B	F	N	40	3.87	.55
9	CH	E	F	N	11	3.87	.74
16	EC	I	M	N	33	3.86	.44
1	CH	A	M	N	37	3.83	.64
7	CH	D	F	N	25	3.83	.64
20	MA	L	M	N	12	3.77	.50
6	CH	D	F	N	27	3.76	.54
15	EC	H	F	A	43	3.62	.68
11	EC	F	F	N	29	3.62	.55
14	EC	I	M	N	37	3.59	.57
19	EC	K	M	N	34	3.56	.58
13	EC	H	F	A	49	3.55	.69
18	EC	J	M	A	21	3.54	.58

Table 6 (continued)

Instructor Characteristics and Means of Overall Teaching Effectiveness Ratings by Section

Section Number	Course Type	Instructor Code	Instructor Gender	Accent Code	Class Length	Overall Effectiveness	
						M	SD
17	EC	J	M	A	21	3.52	.57
5	CH	C	F	N	11	3.35	.81
10	EC	F	F	N	34	3.35	.63
27	MA	S	M	A	39	3.31	.54
12	EC	G	M	A	31	3.31	.62
29	MA	U	M	N	46	3.30	.54
28	MA	Y	M	A	35	3.13	.61
25	MA	Q	M	N	42	3.11	.79
24	MA	P	M	A	37	2.70	.79
26	MA	R	M	A	41	2.57	.83
22	MA	N	M	A	35	2.41	.73

Note. CH designates courses in Community Health, EC designates courses in Economics, MA designates courses in Mathematics, F designates Female TA, M designates Male TA, A designates Accented speech, and N designates Nonaccented speech. Class length is reported in minutes.

Table 7

Means - Year in School

Year in School	M	SD
Senior	3.74	.70
Junior	3.66	.68
Sophomore	3.47	.72
Freshman	3.36	.92
Graduate Student	3.29	.76

Table 8

Means - Anticipated Grade

Anticipated Grade	M	SD
A	3.64	.71
B	3.39	.74
C	3.23	.78
D	2.50	2.12
F	1.00	.00

Table 9

Means - Prior Interest in Course

Prior Interest in Course	M	SD
Extremely Interested	3.84	.85
Somewhat Interested	3.56	.70
Neutral	3.49	.67
Somewhat Disinterested	3.26	.77
Extremely Disinterested	3.24	.88

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